

Client: Utah
Source: Land Rover World (Main)
Date: 01 March 2011
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Reach: 17500
Size: 2180cm2
Value: 2550.6

UTAH
LIFE ELEVATED

Back to Moab

Land Rovers from all over the continent descended on Moab, Utah to celebrate the natural beauty of the area, the miles of varied trails, our tight-knit Rover community, and of course, the best 4x4 by far! By Ann Lockley

WHETHER experiencing the area on foot, two wheels or four, over a million visitors each year, from all corners of the earth, are enchanted and enthralled by Moab with its surreal red rock landscape. This year little Moab even beat out bigger and better known places such as the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park when the town was named the third best outdoor and adventure destination* in the US.

For off-roaders, Moab offers everything from leisurely 'Sunday drive' gravel roads that wind through canyons and over mesas to metal crushing, vertigo instilling, rock crawler required technical trails that still fulfil the scenic 'wow' factor. Then there is the slickrock. But do not let the name fool you: as long as your tyres are not wrapped in metal, slickrock is Velcro for 4x4s! For these reasons, the Solihull Society out of Colorado host the National Land Rover Rally in Moab every second year, while alternate years are held in various spots throughout Colorado.

Twenty-one years have passed since Bill Davis of Great Basin Rovers decided what the North American Land Rover community needed was

a centrally located rally to bring all the enthusiasts together in one place. Moab was the perfect location but the first year was not too successful – two vehicles participated and one of them was a Jeep. However, by the second annual National Land

Rover Rally, word had spread and 70 Series Rovers and one brand new Range Rover rolled into Moab.

Moab is still the favourite by far, with the number of registered Rovers always hitting over 150; this year's attendance was no different come Wednesday morning when all 157 Rovers lined up to tackle trails.

Day One: Poison Spider Mesa

One of the most popular trails in the Moab area, Poison Spider is rated a four (out of five) with enough obstacles to challenge, yet you'll still be able to drive your rig home at the end of the day. Located a couple

of miles north of the city, the trail is bordered on the east by Moab Valley and Colorado River to the south. The views are jaw-dropping as you sit 1,000 feet above the city along the rim and at a popular lunch stop near

Little Arch, one of the many natural arches or bridges in the area.

Trail lead Charlie Haigh had nine Rovers lined up behind his ex-mod Defender 110 truck to tackle Poison Spider Mesa. My good friend Jayson Stangel offered up the passenger seat of his modified '96 DI for me and we hit the trail.

The first couple of miles are the stick to the lollipop shaped trail with a series of switchbacks called the Waterfall, which provide the

first challenge with no bypass. The series of intimidating steep slickrock climbs are easier than they appear. The Wedgy is a serious psychological obstacle that some Jeeps can take with one wheel in the wedge at a precarious off-camber angle, but most Rover owners prefer to straddle the V.

Once in the lollipop you continue to climb onto barren slickrock where a ledge proves to be another psychological obstacle. With the passenger side down and a beautiful view of the ground far below, the ledge is just wide enough for a Rover.

The trail meanders for a short distance before returning to the stick and the way out. Except for two

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Rovers overheating at the same spot on the way out, the day was rewarding but uneventful – no breakdowns or body damage.

Day Two: Cliff Hanger and cocktails

With Jayson leading Poison Spider Mesa today, I took the opportunity to ride with Jon Rowley in his '98 DL. I first met Jon at the 2006 National Rally where he performed a perfect three-wheel stand that made it into Land Rover World. It seemed only fitting to see if I could get him in the magazine on my return to Moab.

After a short mix up, we joined the group doing Cliff Hanger; we should have known what we were in for when we saw that the trail leader, Mark Stolte, was in a truggy! Cliff Hanger is well known for its stunning views and many challenging obstacles. Located west of the city, the trail is rimmed by Kane Creek Canyon, Jackson Hole, and Hurrah Pass. The trail is an in/out with obstacles throughout and the turn-around point at the Overlook, a perfect spot for lunch before heading out.

Ten feet from the trailhead, Cliff Hanger separates the boys from the men and the stock rig from the highly modified. A series of steep steps start the descent into Kane Creek Valley, followed by an even steeper drop. Right here there should be a sign that says: 'Not sure you can climb this obstacle? Turn around now!' Why? Because its twin sits 200 feet down the trail and must be climbed to access the rest of the trail!

By far the worst obstacle lies half-way along the four-mile trail. It is another step, but this time you are sitting on the edge that gave the trail its name while pinched between the

wall and a rock; although big enough to cause serious body damage, the rock is definitely too small to stop a truck from plummeting. On our return, several mountain bikers actually stopped to watch, most likely hoping to see some carnage.

The six trucks made it through unscathed until attempting to climb out of the canyon beside the trailhead. Jon Rowley broke a rear axle on his Discovery I and Todd Pfortmiller lost a rear U-joint. Both trucks were winched up the final hill to the trailhead in plenty of time for a cocktail party hosted by the club at the Sunset Grill.

Day Three: Rocks and Vendor Night

Friday is an official day off from trails. Most importantly, it is a chance for ➤

repairs to be done, but most people take it as an opportunity to run trails in smaller groups and relax. However, new this year was an opportunity to take in a tour of Arches National Park with geologist Matt Affolter.

Everyone who travels to Moab is held spellbound by the beauty of the vast expanse of red rock. Arches, fins, canyons, mesas, and towers all blend together in a landscape that captures the imagination. Movies such as Rio Grande, the original Once Upon a Time in the West, Thelma and Louise, and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade have used the canyon lands as a backdrop, while General Motors and Marlboro have filmed commercials on the rocks.

Describing how these formations came to be is best left to the experts, but as Matt explained the process, it became obvious that

the geology of the area is anything but static. It is rare to see erosion so graphically represented in all its various stages and hard to believe that the arch or tower you are looking at today may not be there for your grandchildren to see.

We went from learning about rocks in the rain to discovering what is new and exciting in the world of Land Rovers: vendor night was hosted by the local Boy Scouts at Spanish Trails Arena. Good food and the longest raffle you can imagine made for an eventful evening.

Day Four: Top of the World and Final Banquet

The line-ups behind trail leaders were a little slower Saturday

morning as the Rovers rolled in and friends were more interested in talking than hitting the trails. Again I was in need of a spare seat and Calef Letourney and Taylor Conigan from Rovers North graciously let me ride along in their borrowed 110.

Top of the World is one of the most popular trails in the Moab area because of the final viewpoint. As the name suggests, this in/out trail sits 1,300 feet above The Narrows, an immense valley with a jutting shelf at the very top that is a popular spot

for photo ops. Best viewed from the side, it's possible to drive a vehicle out on the overhang – it's something else to see a truck with nothing underneath it besides a rock shelf!

Top of the World was originally an easy road that most stock vehicles with clearance were able to manage. Erosion has changed the trail dramatically and a few of the obstacles require either a mild lift and bigger tyres or an experienced driver.

That night the final banquet was held in Moab's new community hall.



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After a final thank you from club president Jeff Corwin, it was good-bye again for another year.

*Tripadvisor.com Travellers' Choice 2010 Best Destinations Awards.

"I get knocked down, but I get up again"

Watching him tackle a long, tough trail like Cliff Hanger in his '95 Range Rover Classic, you have no idea that he has stage four colon cancer with metastases in his liver.

Sporting a baseball cap to cover the fine 'chemo' hair, Todd 'Thor' Pfortmiller looks like any other 41-year-old. Maybe a little thin, but the smile on his face and laughter in his voice erodes any thoughts that maybe his slim build is due to illness.

Thor first drove a friend's Range Rover in 1987, the year that Land Rovers were reintroduced to the US market. After establishing his dental practice in 1999, he bought Max, a 1995 Range Rover Classic.

In 2002, Sir William, a '92 RRC, was added to the family as a trail rig. Since then, Sir William has taken Thor over many famous trails in Colorado, Utah and New Mexico, as well as a good number of national Land Rover rallies.

After two days on the trails with him this year, it was impossible not to feel inspired by his courage and determination.

"There's no expiry date on me and I've been showering for years," laughs Thor. Diagnosed in April

2010, he has undergone multiple surgeries, chemo, and experimental radiation therapy, yet it is arguably his attitude that has been his best defence against the disease.

"I have always had an 'I can do whatever I want' kind of nature." Thor backs up the statement with stories of skiing off mountain cliffs and proving that you can actually do 60 mph on rollerblades. "I still feel like I can conquer the world. I don't care if I have cancer or I've slowed down, I will figure out a

way around it." His only worry is about his wife and three daughters, aged 11, nine and seven, if he passes away.

He also has a message to others fighting their own battles, whether it is cancer, another disease, or a disability, especially those that have lived an active life up until then.

"Right when you are diagnosed is the hardest time because you don't know if or when or whether you will be able to continue doing what you love." He read stories of people still being active such as competing in triathlons, surfing and mountain biking after being diagnosed with cancer. "I'd say, well, let's figure out what he did or what she did to deal with it and go on." Thor continues to off-road between chemo sessions, and his next goal is to start mountain biking again.

Not unlike the Land Rover he drives, there is a strength and resiliency in Thor that will go the extra mile to overcome this obstacle in his path.

National Land Rover Rally 2011

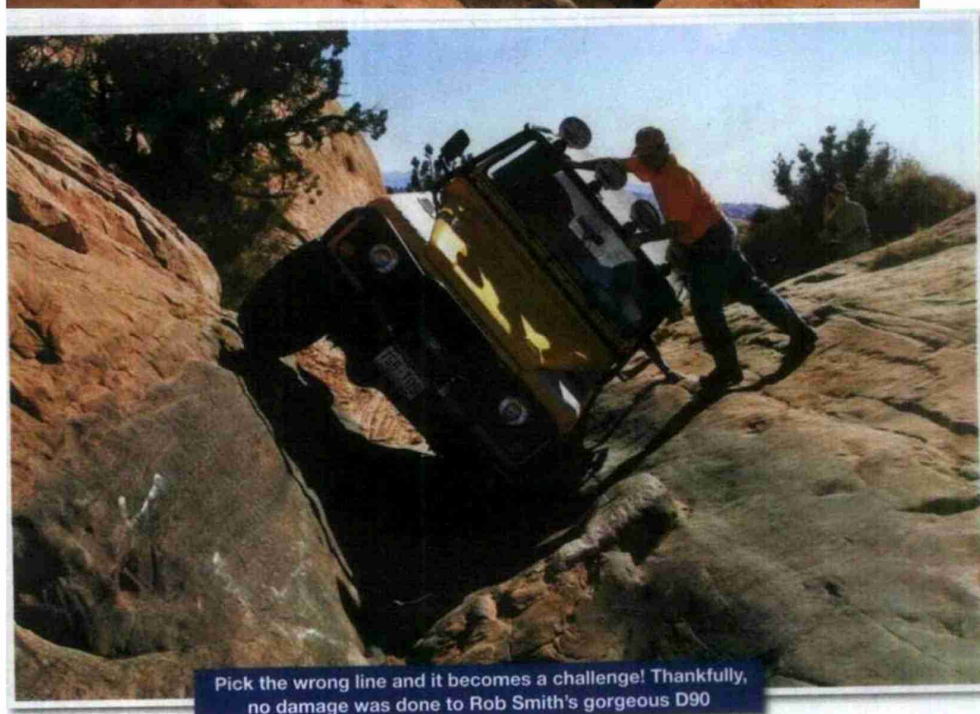
Dates and location have not yet been posted on the Solihull Society website, but the rally is guaranteed to be held in Colorado sometime in late July to mid-August. Keep an eye on www.landrovernation-alrally.org for more information.

LRW



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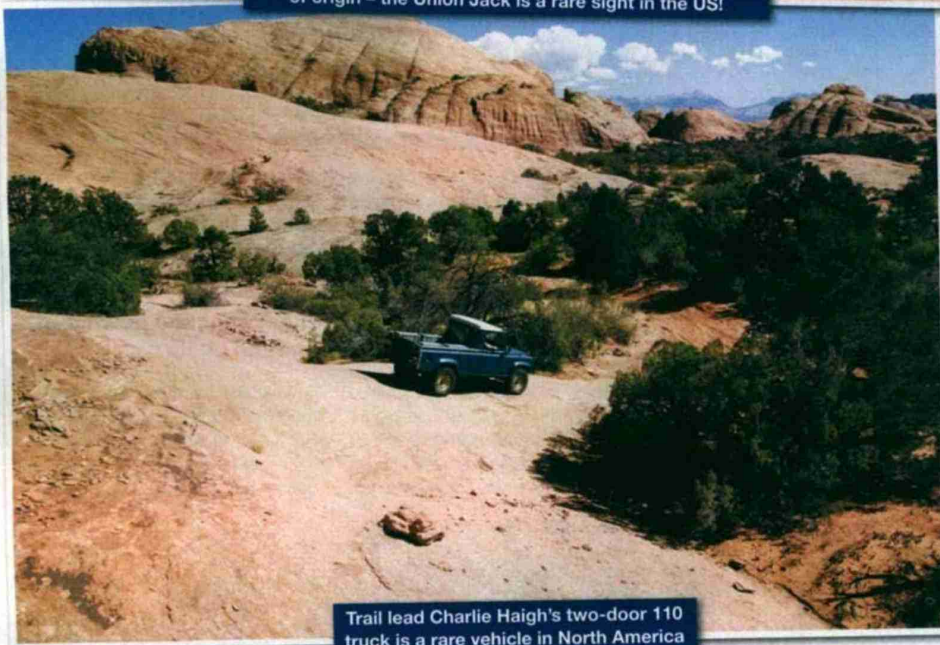


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Todd 'Thor' Pfortmiller's RRC pays homage to its country of origin – the Union Jack is a rare sight in the US!



Trail lead Charlie Haigh's two-door 110 truck is a rare vehicle in North America



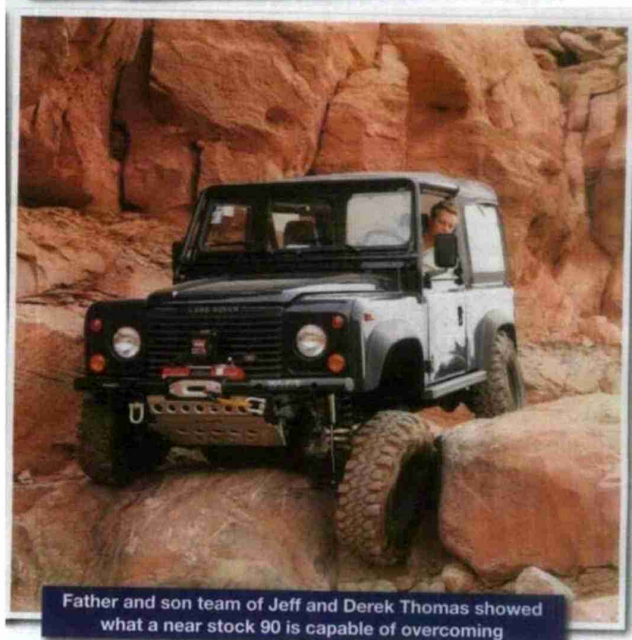
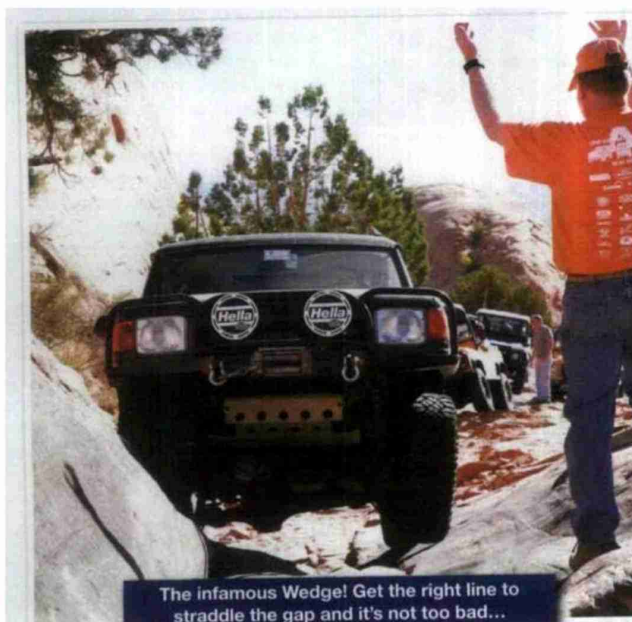
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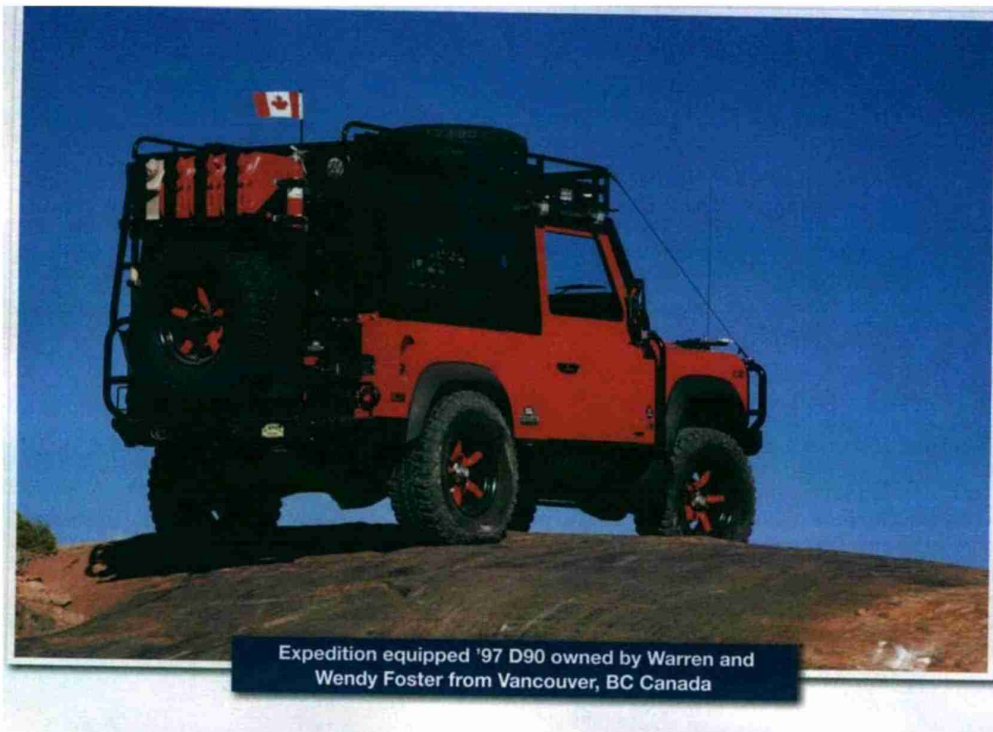
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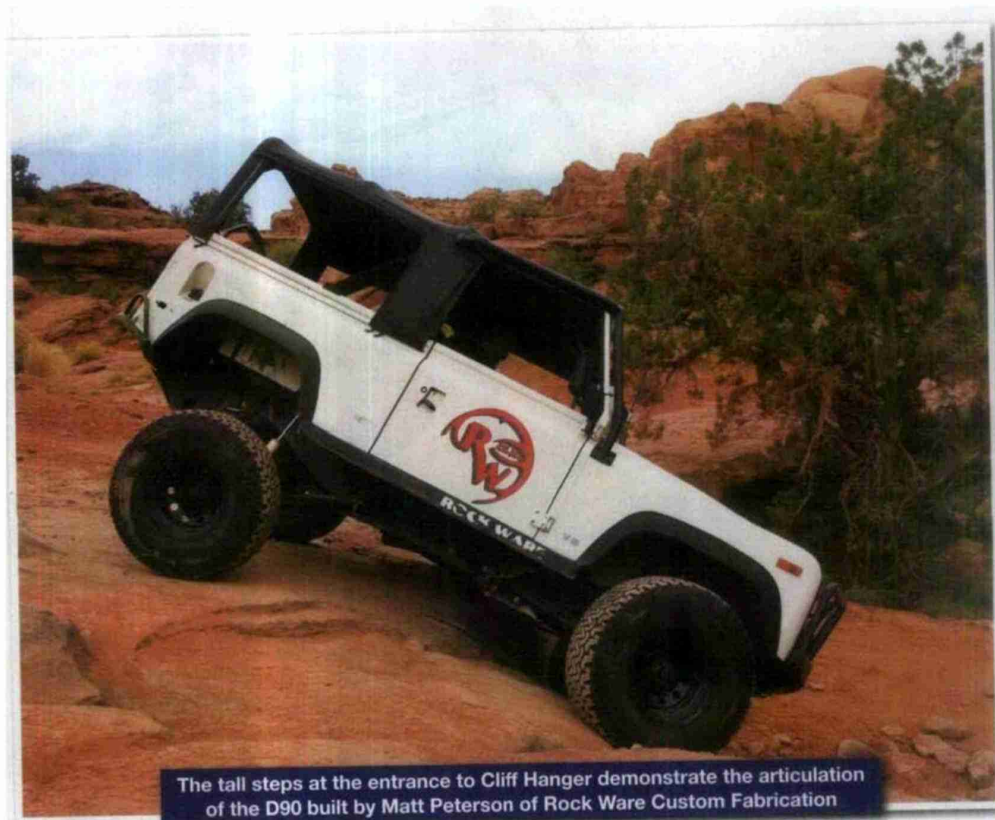
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